

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Clare Davies
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six children and young people of either gender with physical disabilities and/or learning disabilities. The children and young people's placements are made under short break arrangements and the service is delivered and managed by a county council.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

Children and young people benefit from good levels of support from a dedicated staff team who enjoy their work. The homely environment welcomes children and young people with disabilities and is suitably resourced for sensory and stimulating play. Communication systems ensure that children and young people are consulted and can contribute to the planning of their short break. Comprehensive care plans have been summarised into profiles, ensuring key information is available in a short document. Good knowledge and understanding of individual needs by the staff team enhance the children and young people's stay by delivering consistent care. This helps to reduce any anxiety and promotes a safe environment in which to have some fun.

Parents report good levels of satisfaction with this service and they are very complimentary about the staff. Children and young people develop some good relationships with staff and are able to make progress with consistent boundaries and support towards personal targets. The manager is keen to raise standards and provides leadership to the team in working together to develop the service. Errors in medication have not caused harm to children and young people but this shortfall is in contrast to the general care practices and should not occur.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
21 (2001)	ensure that the registered person makes suitable arrangements for the recording, handling, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of any medicines received into the children's home. (Regulation 21(1))	30/06/2013

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that the home has a clear written policy on managing behaviour, which includes supporting positive behaviour, de-escalation of conflicts, discipline, control and restraint, that all staff understand and apply at all times. In particular, ensure that detail is provided in incident reports. (NMS 3.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Children and young people enjoy their visits to this short-break service. They receive a good quality of care with lots of activity and fun, enabling their parents and carers to have a break knowing their child is happy. The introduction to this service is at a pace to suit each individual and their family. This enables children and young people to build up their confidence in the new setting and get to know the staff who will be caring for them.

Children and young people are given choices in relation to food, activities and the décor in the home. The staff ensure that they routinely consult with children and young people using a variety of methods of communication. The staff have recently secured their views in selecting play equipment for the garden and some staff recruitment. Formal meetings are recorded and have covered topics such as, road safety, hygiene, activities and satisfaction of the service. This level of engagement ensures that the views and wishes of children and young people are sought and acted upon.

Clear care plans and personalised targets enable children and young people to make progress during their short breaks. This may be personal development with independence, improved sleep patterns or the ability to make a drink and snack. Staff support and praise children and young people, this encourages their

development and ability to try new skills.

Children and young people are actively involved in using leisure facilities within the community and there are frequent trips to the shops and cafes. Local parks are within walking distance and the two vehicles enable easy access to other attractions. During the inspection, children and young people enjoyed the swing in the garden, the sensory room, the park and a trip to watch the aeroplanes at the local airport. Parents report how they enjoy receiving photographs of what their children have been doing during their short break. The pictures not only provide a record of their time in the home but also a connection for parents to talk with their child about their short break experience. Staff are collating photographs as memory books to give to young people as they leave the service, these records capture events and achievements.

Children and young people learn life skills during their short-break stay. Social stories support some young people in making toast and drinks, for others this may increase to the extent of their involvement in cooking their meal. Where possible, children and young people contribute to the clear up of meal times by putting their plates in the dishwasher. Materials used within the home are collected to recycle; children and young people get involved with this collection and delivery to the recycle centres. These tasks promote independent skills and enable children and young people to become involved with day-to-day chores.

Parents consulted for this inspection report high levels of satisfaction with the service. Comments were made such as, 'all the staff are brilliant with my child, I can't fault them.' 'My child loves it and looks forward to going, the staff are really nice and helpful', and 'It is excellent, they bend over backwards for us.'

Quality of care

The quality of the care is **adequate**.

Generally the quality of care delivered is good. The shortfall reported at this inspection is due to recent errors with medication. Due to a breakdown in communication, an isolated incident led to an incorrect dose being administered and on another occasion a staff member mistakenly administered the amount prescribed. These events had a minimal impact on the health and welfare of young people though highlighted a deficit in communication and staff competence. The manager has addressed this appropriately through team meetings and supervision of staff.

Staff are trained in the administration of medication, this has been refreshed recently. Health professionals provide protocols for specific medical conditions; these ensure that staff have the correct procedure to follow in the event of an emergency such as an epileptic seizure occurring.

Children and young people develop some good relationships with staff and the allocation of the staff rota strives to deliver consistency. This enables children and young people to get to know a minimum number of staff as their carers and

consequently they develop positive relationships during their short break. A key work system ensures that there is a dedicated member of staff with responsibility for coordinating with parents, school and other professionals. Key workers maintain records for children and young people with a particular focus on care plans.

Individual care needs are identified and incorporated into care plans. Parents contribute to a document 'all about me' to capture the routine, personal care needs and preferences for children and young people. This ensures that routines within the family home can be adopted as much as possible during the short break to offer some security and familiarity to the children, young people and their parents. Staff telephone parents prior to every short break planned to obtain current information about their child and their family if necessary. This regular contact ensures that staff have the most up to date information in order to meet the needs of children and young people who use this service. Each child and young person has a specified target to work towards such as, to eat independently, to use symbols to communicate or to make a snack. Daily records are maintained and progress towards these targets are noted. Team meetings provide a forum to review targets and discuss progress.

Consultation with children and young people is an aspect of this short-break service that has improved. Staff ensure that suitable aids to communication are available such as, symbols, photographs and pictures. Most staff are able to communicate using Makaton sign language and staff meetings offer an opportunity to refresh these skills. The children and young people's guide shows, through symbols, how to raise a concern or a complaint with staff. Parents, as advocates, are informed of the complaints procedure. Records confirm that matters of concern or complaint are managed in a satisfactory manner.

The staff maintain good relationships with the schools and undertake visits to promote consistency of practice. Games and toys throughout the home promote educational achievement at different levels of learning. Many children and young people enjoy sensory stimulation and the home is suitably resourced with a sensory room and equipment to meet these needs.

The home is purposefully designed for children and young people with special needs yet it retains a homely environment. The garden provides a secure outdoor space with play equipment and a lawn. There are doors to the garden from the dining room; this provides a good level of supervision without compromising the independence of some children and young people who enjoy the freedom of the garden.

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **good** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

Parents report that they feel their children are safe throughout their short-break stay. This is underpinned not only by the staff knowledge in child protection but through the physically safe environment. The building is secure without restricting children

and young people's liberty. Good staffing levels provide supervision that contributes to their safety. There are clear procedures to follow should a child or young person go missing.

Risk assessments and behaviour support plans assist staff in providing a consistent response to behaviour with an emphasis on distraction. Staff are trained in the safe handling of challenging behaviour and physical intervention. Incidents of any behaviour requiring staff intervention is recorded, physical restraint is rare. Generally records capture the necessary details though some require improvement for greater clarity. For example, when a young person is guided by the arm to leave a room, the records do not always state the technique used, as was discussed in staff training. This is an area to improve in record keeping, not care practices.

The skills and experience of the staff team mean they are able to identify any new patterns of behaviour. Such changes are discussed amongst the team and with parents, schools and other professionals to identify triggers and decide on a coordinated approach. A social worker reports that this service does very well in managing challenging behaviour and the staff are skilled in ensuring children and young people easily become settled.

There are sound procedures in place for the recruitment of staff. All necessary checks are undertaken to ensure that the adults are suitable to care for children and young people. The involvement of parents with the recruitment process is commendable and evident of effective partnerships to promote the safety and welfare of children and young people.

A range of risk assessments cover all aspects of the environment, transport, outings and activities. An in-depth assessment has identified all the plants and trees in the grounds to consider if they pose any risk while children and young people play in the garden. This has ensured the safety of the grounds and heightened staff awareness to the possibility of poisonous plants and trees when out in the community. Matters of health and safety are routinely checked and staff receive updates on training in fire safety, food hygiene and moving and handling techniques. The introduction of an 'emergency bag' with a mobile phone, a torch, a high visibility top and all key information relating to the children and young people present is a very good development. This ensures that night staff are prepared to evacuate the building if required in a safe manner, equipped to manage any emergency and provide safety for children and young people.

The staff team are enthusiastic about their work and in supporting children and young people to have an enjoyable stay with purposeful activities. The service is sufficiently resourced with good staffing ratios, access to varied activities and outings, and a pleasant homely environment. Parents report that they feel confident that their children are cared for in a safe place.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the children's home are **good**.

The manager is effective in monitoring the service and identifying areas for development. The two recommendations from the previous inspection have been met. An external manager within the organisation undertakes monthly monitoring visits. This level of scrutiny is independent from the day-to-day management of the service and is further supported by the occasional involvement of county councillors. Such visits demonstrate the local authority's commitment to their role as corporate parents.

Newsletters and a forum provide opportunities for engagement with parents. There has been a low take up of the parent forum to date, however those that have attended have found it very beneficial in supporting them to care for a child with disabilities. There is recognition of the importance of multi-agency working for the benefit of children and young people. Regular contact with health professionals, social workers and school staff contributes towards working together with families.

Sound policies and procedures provide clarity and guidance to the staff team. Staff receive regular supervision and good training opportunities; new staff report feeling supported into their new role and being made welcome by the team. Some staff take responsibility for areas such as leading the shift, developing the resources for activities, maintaining an up-to-date photograph display and matters concerning health and safety. Regular staff meetings provide a forum for sharing best practice and keeping abreast of new policy and guidance. Professional development is encouraged and staff are supported to obtain formal qualifications in social care and management.

About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the *Inspections of children's homes – framework for inspection* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.